BASILIDES'S GOSPEL AND *EXEGETICA* (*TREATISES*)[1]

BY

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ABSTRACT: The surviving witnesses to Basilides of Alexandria (*fl.* 120-140 C.E.) reflect considerable variety and confusion concerning his writing(s). Attempts by scholars to present Basilides as an exegete of Christian scripture, and even as the author of a gospel, are based on precious little evidence, which scholars have at times misinterpreted. This article argues that only a limited interest in gospel materials on the part of Basilides can be demonstrated from the surviving portions of his *Exegetica* (*Treatises*). Moreover, if Basilides did indeed write a gospel, it was not a narrative or sayings gospel concerned primarily with the life or the teachings of Jesus. Finally, prior to Origen in the mid-third century C.E. the designation (or title) *Exegetica* did not connote an 'exegetical' commentary. Clement of Alexandria's title for Basilides's work (Ἐξηγητικά, *Strom.* 4.81.1) instead supports the inference that this writing comprised "explanations" of Basilides's theological system.

Relatively little is known for sure concerning the life of Basilides of Alexandria (*fl.* 120-140 C.E.). He was probably active in Alexandria during the 130s C.E.[2] The paucity of evidence and contradictory nature of the

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[1] This article is a revision and expansion of a paper presented at the 2002 North American Patristics Society Annual Meeting. The author's thanks are due to William L. Petersen and Matyáš Havrda.

[2] B. A. Pearson, "Pre-Valentinian Gnosticism in Alexandria," in: *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. B. A. Pearson et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 455-66; here, 461, notes evidence for Basilides's activity in Alexandria in 132 C.E.: "According to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 7.106) he was active in Alexandria during the reigns of the emperors Hadrian (117-138) and Antoninus Pius (138-161). . . . Eusebius, in his *Chronicle* (according to Jerome's Latin version), lists as one of the items for the sixteenth year of Hadrian's reign (132) the following notation: 'Basilides the heresiarch was living in Alexandria. From him derive the Gnostics.'" Apparently following Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 21, writes: "Basilides died at Alexandria in the reign of Hadrian, and from him the Gnostic sects arose. In this tempestuous time also, Cochebas leader of the Jewish faction put Christians to death with various tortures" (ET: A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* [New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1890-1900], 2/3.368). Jerome's

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patristic witnesses to Basilides have not, however, stopped scholars from describing with some confidence the early Christian gospel, and especially the gospel commentary, that Basilides allegedly wrote.

In the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, for example, Kurt Aland cites the *Gospel according to Basilides* as the source of a distinctive witness to Matt 7:6ab.[3] Von Campenhausen exemplifies this position concerning Basilides's alleged gospel: "In all probability it was at first, as Agrippa Castor says . . ., referred to by them simply as 'the Gospel'. The designation κατὰ Βασιλείδην εὐαγγέλιον . . . may not originally have been attached to it."[4] Walter Bauer, Werner Foerster, Gerhard May, Everett Procter and Andrew F. Gregory concur that Basilides did in fact write a gospel.[5]

In addition to the claim that Basilides wrote a gospel, a number of other scholars characterize Basilides as a Christian teacher who wrote a gospel commentary. For instance, in an important study Winrich A. Löhr argues concerning Basilides and Basilides's son and disciple Isidore:

> Basilides . . . kommentierte eine selbst erstellte Evangelienrezension in 24 Büchern; . . . So kann man in dürren Worten das Wesentliche an biographi-

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allusion to the "tempestuous time" of the Second Jewish Revolt led by Bar Kokhba suggests that Basilides was active 132-135 C.E. Cf. the observation of W. A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule: Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (WUNT 83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 20, that "aus den übrigen Quellen erhebt sich kein Widerspruch gegen die Datierung des Clemens" (cf. 326).

[3] Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (15th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 93, referring to the ultimate source of Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24.5.2 as "Evang. sec. Basilidem" ("the Gospel according to Basilides"). Aland's *Synopsis* (481-2) does not, however, note the parallel (discussed below) to Mark 15:21 || Matt 27:32 attributed to Basilides in Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.24.4 and Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24.3.1-5.

[4] Von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972 [1968]), 139 n. 161; cf. 139 n. 158.

[5] Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [^{2}1964]), 66, 170, 190; cf. 203; May, *Creatio ex nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994 [1978]), 65: "And certainly he [Basilides], who had written a gospel himself, was greatly interested in the gospels that were available" (German original: 66). Additionally, Procter, *Christian Controversy in Alexandria: Clement's Polemic against the Basilideans and Valentinians* (American University Studies VII/172; Frankfurt am Main/New York: Lang, 1995), 1, follows Foerster, "Basilides," in: idem, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (ed. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972-74 [1969-71]), 1.59-83; here, 74: "From notes in the Church Fathers we learn above all that Basilides was a copious writer. . . . [A] gospel originated with him" (German original: 1.99). So also Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (WUNT 2.169; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 77-80 (albeit with some caution); cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 271.

> schen Informationen über Basilides und Isidor zusammenfassen. Basilides und Isidor werden damit christliche Lehrer in die erste Hälfte des 2. Jahrhunderts eingeordnet. . . .[6]

Others, including Theodor Zahn, Hans Windisch, Robert M. Grant, Bentley Layton, Everett Procter, M. J. Edwards, and Christoph Markschies, likewise characterize Basilides as an exegete of gospel materials, and sometimes of other Christian scripture as well.[7]

This article offers a critical assessment of these two claims about Basilides's gospel and gospel commentary. It will be argued that if a writing of Basilides did receive the designation "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον), it was not a narrative or sayings gospel concerned primarily with the life and teachings of Jesus. This inquiry is of obvious (potential) interest to the use of the term εὐαγγέλιον as a literary designation in the first half of the second century.[8] The article also considers the relationship of Basilides's *Exegetica*

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[6] *Basilides und seine Schule*, 325-6. Löhr also writes, "Wir vermuteten, daß die Evangelienrezension des Basilides seinem Kommentar als der Text beigegeben war, auf den sich der Kommentar bezog. Dieser Kommentar . . . behandelte eher anhand einer Perikope ein theologisches Thema" (329; cf. 12, 34, 215).

[7] Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Erlangen: Deichert, 1889), 1.763-74; Windisch, "Das Evangelium des Basilides," *ZNW* 7 (1906): 236-46; Grant, *Second-Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments* (Translations of Christian Literature 6; London: SPCK, 1946), 18: "He [Basilides] composed the first commentary on the gospels, with the exception of that of his contemporary Papias." Similarly, Layton, "The Significance of Basilides in Ancient Christian Thought," *Representations* (Berkeley, CA) 28 (1989): 135-51; here, 136: "Basilides must have set a stunning precedent in educated Christian circles as the first Christian philosopher and one of the earliest New Testament expositors . . ." (cf. 144-5). So also Procter, *Christian Controversy in Alexandria*, 1; Edwards, review of Löhr, *Basilides* in: *JTS* 48 (1997): 238-41; here, 241: "After a perusal of this study we see clearly what [Basilides] was: a Christian exegete who was ready to employ eclectic methods for the better understanding of the Scriptures." Likewise, Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003 [2001]), 79: "It emerges from the fragments that in all probability Basilides published under the title 'Expositions' his own version of the Gospel of Luke with a relatively free commentary in 24 volumes." Cf. J. C. Ayer, *A Source Book for Ancient Church History, from the Apostolic Age to the Close of the Conciliar Period* (New York: Scribner's, 1913), 82: "Of his [Basilides'] Gospel, Commentary on that Gospel in twenty-four books (*Exegetica*), and his odes only fragments remain of the second, preserved by Clement of Alexandria and in the Acta Archelai."

[8] In the 'NT' writings and in many of the other earliest Christian writings, εὐαγγέλιον designates oral proclamation (good news), rather than a writing or a (new) genre or literary designation. On this point see, e.g., H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London: SCM/Philadelphia: TPI), 1-34; R. H. Gundry, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ: How Soon a Book?" *JBL* 115 (1996): 321-5; W. L. Petersen, "The Genesis of the Gospels," in: *New Testament Textual*

(*Treatises*) to other early Christian literature. This study argues that the characterization of Basilides as an exegete of Christian scripture is based on precious little evidence and, at times, a misinterpretation of certain witnesses to Basilides and his writing(s). A (mostly) diachronic survey of the main witnesses to Basilides's life and writings will precede an analysis of claims that scholars have made about Basilides's gospel and gospel commentary.

Witnesses to Basilides's Gospel and Exegetica (Treatises)

1. *Irenaeus*, Adversus haereses *I.24.4*

Irenaeus attributes the following description of the crucifixion to Basilides:

> He [Christ] appeared on earth as a man and performed miracles (*apparuisse eum . . . virtutes perfecisse*). Thus, he himself did not suffer. Rather, a certain Simon of Cyrene was compelled (*Simonem quendam Cyrenaeum angariatum*) to carry his cross for him. It was he [Simon] who was ignorantly and erroneously crucified (*et hunc . . . crucifixum*), being transfigured by him [Jesus], so that (*ut*) he [Simon] might be thought to be Jesus. Moreover, Jesus assumed the form of Simon and stood by, laughing at them.[9]

With regard to accounting for Jesus' laughter, R. M. Grant notes the likely OT foundation of Basilides's (re-)interpretation of Jesus' passion in light of Psalm 2.[10]

Criticism and Exegesis (FS Joël Delobel; BETL 161; ed. A. Denaux; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 33-65; A. Y. Reed, "Εὐαγγέλιον: Orality, Textuality, and the Christian Truth in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*," *VC* 56 (2002): 11-46; J. A. Kelhoffer, "'How Soon a Book' Revisited: ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ as a Reference to 'Gospel' Materials in the First Half of the Second Century," *ZNW* 95/1-2 (2004): 1-34.

[9] Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.24.4. ET (modified): B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 423; Lat.: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *Contre les hérésies* (SC 264; Paris: Cerf, 1979), 326-8. Layton's translation incorrectly construes *apparuisse eum . . . perfecisse* (I.24.4, l. 11) as a reference to "intellect" (*nous*), rather than to "Christ" (*Christus*, mentioned in I.24.4, l. 8).

[10] "Gnostic Origins and the Basilidians of Irenaeus," *VC* 13 (1959): 121-5; here, 123-4: "Why was he [Jesus] laughing? The answer seems to be provided by the words of a Psalm which we know was interpreted messianically by early Christians. Psalm 2 begins with a picture of the 'archons' (LXX) conspiring 'against the Lord and his Anointed,' and it goes on to say that 'he who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision' (verse 4). Here is, or may well be, the source of the notion that the Savior derided his enemies." Cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 265 n. 38.

Irenaeus's depiction of Basilides's Docetic christology appears, moreover, to be based upon an interpretation of material preserved in Mark 15:21[11] and the Matthean parallel passage (Matt 27:32).[12] Mark has the (historic) present active indicative (ἀγγαρεύουσιν), which Matthew changed to the aorist (ἠγγάρευσαν). At the very least, the perfect passive participle reflected by Irenaeus (*angariatus*) stems from *Irenaeus's* (undisputed) use of either or both of these gospels, or perhaps a harmonized version of this gospel material.[13] With regard to assessing the historical Basilides's interest in gospel materials, however, the testimony of Irenaeus is of questionable value.[14]

2. *The Title and Length of Basilides's* Treatises *or* Exegetica

Concerning Basilides's own work(s), there is good evidence for the existence and contents of certain parts of his *Treatises* or *Exegetica*. Two extended portions and one short passage from this work survive. One of the two

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[11] Mark 15:21-24: "[21] They compelled (ἀγγαρεύουσιν) a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene (τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον), the father of Alexander and Rufus. [22] Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). [23] And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. [24] And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take."

[12] Matt 27:32-35: "[32] As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon (ἄνθρωπον Κυρηναῖον ὀνόματι Σίμωνα); they compelled (ἠγγάρευσαν) this man to carry his cross. [33] And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), [34] they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. [35] And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots." Different from Mark 15:21 || Matt 27:32, Luke 23:26 has ἐπιτίθημι rather than ἀγγαρεύω (καὶ ὡς ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν, ἐπιλαβόμενοι Σίμωνά τινα Κυρηναῖον ἐρχόμενον ἀπ' ἀγροῦ *ἐπέθηκαν* αὐτῷ τὸν σταυρὸν φέρειν ὄπισθεν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ).

[13] G. N. Stanton, "The Fourfold Gospel," *NTS* 43 (1997): 317-46, esp. 319-22, notes scholars' widespread acknowledgement of this point concerning Irenaeus. On the existence of harmonized gospel citations as early as *Second Clement*, see, e.g., Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London: SCM/Philadelphia: TPI, 1990), 17-18, 349-60; cf. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2.112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 169-70.

[14] With Löhr, *Basilides*, 255-73, who argues that Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.24.3-7, which includes the testimony about Jesus and Simon of Cyrene at the crucifixion (I.24.4), derives from source material that can plausibly be dated to the mid-second century. Despite its early date, Löhr (272-3) doubts that *Adv. haer.* I.24.3-7 offers a reliable witness to the historical Basilides; so also F. Legge, *Philosophumena, Or the Refutation of All Heresies* (2 Vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1921), 2.79 n. 2; D. Wanke, *Das Kreuz Christi bei Irenäus von Lyon* (BZNW 99; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000), 75-6.

longer sections is in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*.[15] The other two passages appear in Hegemonius's *Acta Archelai* (*c.* 330/348 C.E.), an anti-Manichaean writing that survives in Latin.[16]

This writing of Basilides, whatever its original contents and foci, must have been a sizeable work, since Clement claims to quote from its twenty-third book (Βασιλείδης δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰκοστῷ τρίτῳ τῶν Ἐξηγητικῶν, *Strom.* 4.81.1). Eusebius of Caesarea credits Agrippa Castor with having written a response to Basilides in the second century (*Hist. eccl.* 4.7.6-8). Eusebius quotes Agrippa Castor to the effect that Basilides's work comprised a total of twenty-four books, and, as is argued below, at least the claim concerning the length of this work is credible.[17] Arguably the surest indication that Basilides's work was extensive is the *Acta Archelai*'s citation of Basilides's own reference to its thirteenth book. The author of the *Acta Archelai* (Hegemonius) claims to be familiar with Basilides's writing and cites Basilides's reference to the thirteenth book of Basilides's "*Treatises*" (Lat.: *tractatuum eius*, 67.5a; *nobis tractatuum*, 67.5b).[18]

Moreover, the *Acta Archelai* attributes to Basilides himself both the title for this work ("*Treatises*")[19] and its organization into individual books. It may

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[15] Greek text: C. Mondésert and A. van den Hoek, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates IV* (SC 463; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 188-92. An ET of the relevant passages is conveniently available in: Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 442-3.

[16] Lat.: C. H. Beeson, ed., *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai* (GCS 16; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906); ET: M. Vermes and S. N. C. Lieu, *Acta Archelai* (Manichaean Studies 4; Turnhout: Brepols, 2001). This writing purports to relate a disputation between Bishop Archelaus and Mani. Beeson, *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai*, ix-xix, argues that the surviving Latin edition of the *Acta Archelai* (*c.* 392/400 C.E.) is a translation of a Greek work by Hegemonius of Chalcedon, about whom nothing more is known, except that he wrote after the Council of Nicea (325 C.E.). Cf. E. Spät, "The 'Teachers' of Mani in the *Acta Archelai* and Simon Magus," *VC* 58/1 (2004): 1-23; here, 1; Löhr, *Basilides*, 219-21; Foerster, "Basilides," 74; Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.357-8, 4.209; Ayer, *Source Book*, 82-4.

[17] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7: "In expounding his [Basilides's] mysteries he [Agrippa Castor] says that he [Basilides] compiled twenty-four books on the gospel." See the analysis of this testimony below.

[18] *Acta Archelai* 67.5b: "As we are writing the thirteenth book of our treatises (*nobis tractatuum*) the word of salvation (*salutaris sermo*) will provide for us the necessary and fruitful content."

[19] The original Greek term used by Basilides for his work is open to question. Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, I/2.764, suggests ὁμιλία ("homily"); cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 226. Two other possibilities are μεταχειρίσεις (or μεταχειρήσεις? "pursuits, studies, treatments") and ψηλαφήσεις ("inquiries, searchings"). Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 4.81.1) offers the title Ἐξηγητικά, which is also possible in light of this article's argument that Ἐξηγητικά need not denote an 'exegetical' biblical commentary.

thus be helpful for future scholarship to refer to Basilides's work by this title (*Treatises*), or at least to include it along with *Exegetica* (Gk.: Ἐξηγητικά, attested by Clement, *Strom.* 4.81.1). It will be argued that the extant fragments of the *Exegetica* (*Treatises*) do not support the claim that this work was a gospel commentary. What can be ascertained about this work's content and genre will be evaluated in the following analyses of these fragments and, further below, of the most likely denotation of Clement's title for this work (Ἐξηγητικά).

3. *Clement's Witness to Basilides's* Exegetica

Of the surviving portions of Basilides's *Exegetica*, the passage best known to scholars, from Clement's *Stromateis*, addresses human suffering.[20] According to Clement, Basilides maintained that no person's tribulations are ordained by God. They are rather God's punishment for a person's sinfulness, either in this life or a previous one (*Strom.* 4.81.2-3). In this portion of his work, Basilides seeks above all to defend the goodness of Providence (τὸ προνοοῦν).[21] As test-cases for this position, Basilides discusses the suffering of Christian martyrs, of a newborn baby, and of Jesus during the course of his life as a whole (but not specifically the crucifixion).

With the possible exception of *Stromateis* 4.81.2,[22] there is no indication

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[20] Clem., *Strom.* 4.81.2-83.1. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 418, notes that, different from Irenaeus and Hippolytus, "St. Clement is not entirely hostile to Basilides, and in general his conciliatory attitude toward thinkers he disagrees with adds to his trustworthiness as a reporter." Layton thus infers that, as compared with the other patristic evidence, Clement's witness is "[m]ost trustworthy of all the reports about Basilides." Note, e.g., that in *Strom.* 3.1-2 Clement is careful to attribute a citation of Matt 19:11-12 to Basilides's *followers* (οἱ . . . ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου) rather than to Basilides himself. Similarly, according to Clem., *Strom.* 1.146.1, followers of Basilides (οἱ . . . ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου) hold a festival on the (supposed) day of Jesus' baptism and spend the night reading (προδιανυκτερεύοντες [ἐν] ἀναγνώσεσι).

[21] Basilides, *Exegetica, apud* Clem., *Strom.* 4.82.2c: "For I will say anything (πάντ') rather than call Providence evil." Cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 131-2; Procter, *Christian Controversy in Alexandria*, 88-93.

[22] Basilides, *Exegetica, apud* Clem., *Strom.* 4.82.2a ("Indeed, someone who intends to commit adultery is an adulterer even without succeeding in the act, and someone who intends to commit murder is a murderer even without being able to commit the act.") has obvious similarities to Matt 5:27-28 and 5:21-22 (cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 128 n. 16: "vermutlich biblisch inspirierten (vgl. z. B. Mt 5,21.27) Beispiele. . . ."). Nonetheless, the majority of Basilides's excerpted discussion on human suffering is not 'exegetical' of 'gospel' or other 'biblical' materials (cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 131).

that Basilides is attempting to 'exegete' a written gospel.[23] The same is true for three other parts of the *Stromateis* that allude briefly to Basilides's view of suffering.[24] Thus, concerning the portions of Basilides's work that Clement cites and paraphrases, Clement's title (Ἐξηγητικά, *Strom.* 4.81.1) does not support the inference that Basilides wrote a commentary on gospel or other biblical materials. This point will be taken up in greater detail below.

4. *The* Acta Archelai *on Basilides's* Treatises

The other portions of Basilides's surviving work appear in the early-fourth century anti-Manichaean *Acta Archelai et Manetis* 67.5-11. The *Acta Archelai* reveals two things about Basilides's work: an interest in the Parable of the Rich Man and the Poor Man (cf. Luke 16:19-31), and a discussion rooted in dualism of light and darkness, good and evil.

Concerning the interpretation of the parable, Basilides writes: "By means of the parable of the rich man and the poor man,[25] it [the word of salvation][26] demonstrates the source of the nature that comes upon things with-

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[23] Although Löhr recognizes this point in the case of Clement, *Strom.* 4.81.2-3, he and other scholars persist in identifying Basilides as an exegete of Christian scripture. See Löhr, *Basilides*, 12-13, 34, 215, 325-6, 329; Grant, *Second-Century Christianity*, 18; Ayer, *Source Book*, 82; Windisch, "Evangelium des Basilides."

[24] Clem., *Strom.* 4.86.1; 4.88.3; 4.88.5. Cf. Y. Tissot, "A propos des fragments de Basilide sur le martyre," *RHPR* 76 (1996): 35-50.

[25] Lat.: *per parabolam divitis et pauperis*. In Luke 16:19a, τις . . . πλούσιος = *quidam . . . dives* (VL and Vg). In Luke 16:20a, πτωχὸς δέ τις = *quidam mendicus* (Vg). According to W. Matzkow und K. Aland, eds., *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung* (Vol. 3: *Lucas-Evangelium*; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, ²1976), 3.188, the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate consistently translate πλούσιος (Luke 16:19a) as *dives* (so also Basilides *apud* Hegemonius's *Acta Archelai*). In the case of πτωχός (Luke 16:20a), a majority of the second-century Old Latin mss (*aur b c f ff² q*) and the Vulgate differ with Hegemonius's translation of Basilides and attest *mendicus*. Certain Old Latin mss, however, have *pauper* (*a d i l*; also Basilides *apud* Hegemonius), and one VL version has *pauperculus* (*r¹*). Thus, the key terms used by Basilides for identifying this parable (*dives* and *pauper*) are attested, respectively, by all (πλούσιος, Luke 16:19a) and some (πτωχός, Luke 16:20a) of the Old Latin mss. Such similarities in wording suggest the likelihood that Basilides did in fact refer to the Lukan Parable of the Rich Man and the Poor Man (Luke 16:19-31).

[26] If correct, Basilides would offer an early witness to this Lukan material (= Luke?) in the first half of the second century. Moreover, Basilides alludes to "the word of salvation" (*salutaris sermo*), mentioned in *Acta Archelai* 67.5b. Cf. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts*, 78.

out a root or a place" (*Acta Archelai* 67.5c). In Luke 16:19-31, the Parable of the Rich Man and the Poor Man (Lazarus) represents special Lukan material (L), which, moreover, reflects this evangelist's particular interest in the poor.[27] It thus seems at least plausible that Basilides came into contact with this special Lukan material from Luke's source(s), some writing dependent upon Luke, or, more probably, the gospel of Luke itself.[28] In his own work, Basilides apparently offered an allegorical interpretation of this parable that the author of the *Acta Archelai* chose to cut off abruptly (67.6). *Acta Archelai* 67.5c thus offers evidence for connecting at least part of Basilides's *Exegetica* (or *Treatises*) with written gospel material.[29]

The extended section from Basilides's work quoted in *Acta Archelai* 67.7-11 concerns a different topic from that in 67.6, namely a dualistic discussion of light and darkness, good and evil.[30] *Acta Archelai* 67.7-11 reflects the view that "perfect good" is not to be found "in this world" (67.10), where only a portion of the Light is visible to humans.[31] Yet this passage reveals no effort to exegete a 'biblical' text (not even Genesis 1!), much less any gospel material.

As noted above, *Acta Archelai* 67.7-11 offers a more extended citation from Basilides's work of a markedly different sort of material. According to *Acta*

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[27] See, e.g., Luke 6:20b, 21, 24-26, 12:13-21, 14:12-24, 16:1-9, 18:22, 19:8, 21:2; F. Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002 [1989]), 223-5.

[28] Basilides's knowledge of Lukan gospel material might contribute to an explanation for why (the non-Gnostic) Marcion, who canonized an edited version of Luke, came to be criticized along with others such as Basilides, who were deemed to be 'Gnostics.' See Justin, *Dial.* 35.6; Clement, *Strom.* 7.106.4-107.1, 7.108.1; Muratorian Canon; Hegesippus *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.4-6.

[29] The present author agrees with Löhr's arguments in favor of the authenticity of this citation of Basilides's work (*Basilides*, 248-9), but disagrees with Löhr's inference that this material is representative of a sort of gospel commentary by Basilides: "Das alles paßt gut zu Basilides und seinem Evangelienkommentar" (*Basilides*, 248; cf. 227-9).

[30] In *Acta Archelai* 67.7, Basilides mentions the view of some "barbarians," who "have said that all things have two beginnings (*initia omnium duo*), to which they have associated good and evil (*bona et mala*), stating that these beginnings themselves are without beginning and unbegotten (*sine initio esse et ingenita*). In other words, there was in the beginning Light and Darkness (*in principiis lucem fuisse ac tenebras*), which existed of themselves, which were not said to be begotten."

[31] *Acta Archelai* 67.11. The author of the *Acta Archelai* summarizes the importance of this dualistic cosmogony to Basilides's system as follows: "So if anyone is able to demolish the unbegotten dualism (*subvertere . . . ingenitam dualitatem*), which he propounds, then I say he would at the same time cut down the entire forest of his words" (68.2).

Archelai 67.6, this material appears in Basilides's work after an interval of some "five hundred lines." It is not clear whether the five hundred lines omitted in *Acta Archelai* 67 were devoted to the Lukan parable (cf. Luke 16:19-31) or to some other matter.

5. *Origen on the Gospel according to Basilides*

A question of significance equal to the extent to which Basilides's work may have been 'exegetical' is the question whether Basilides or his followers would have acknowledged the term εὐαγγέλιον as a description for a gospel that he allegedly wrote. Origen offers the earliest testimony to a gospel written by Basilides:

> The church has four gospels. Heretics have very many. One of them is entitled *According to the Egyptians*, another *According to the Twelve Apostles*. Basilides, too, dared to write a gospel and give it his own name (ἐτόλμησε καὶ Βασιλείδης γράψαι κατὰ Βασιλείδην εὐαγγέλιον). "Many have tried" to write, but only four gospels have been approved.[32]

Neither Origen nor any of the subsequent patristic witnesses to the existence of Basilides's gospel reveal anything about the content of this alleged writing, however.[33]

6. *Hippolytus*, Refutatio *VII.20-27, X.14*

Hippolytus of Rome claims to represent Basilides's uses of the term εὐαγγέλιον eight times in six passages:

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[32] Origen, *Homilies on Luke* 1.2, alluding to Luke 1:1: πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν. Greek and Latin texts: M. Rauer, ed., *Origenes Werke* (GCS 9: *Die Homilien zu Lukas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die Griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars*; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, ^{2}1959), 9.4-5; ET: J. T. Lienhard, *Origen, Homilies on Luke; Fragments on Luke* (FC 94; Washington: Catholic University of America, 1996), 5-6; cf. Windisch, "Evangelium des Basilides," 236.

[33] H.-C. Puech (revised by B. Blatz), "The Gospel of Basilides," in: *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. ed. R. McL. Wilson; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, ^{2}1991 [^{6}1990]), 1.397-9; here, 397, notes later references to Basilides's gospel in Jerome's Latin translation of Origen's homily, as well as Jerome, *Comm. in Mt.* Prologue (on the *Evangelium Basilidis*); Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii Lucae* i.2; the Venerable Bede, *In Lucae euangelium Expositio* I, Prologue; and Philip of Side's partially preserved *Church History*. Cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, 31: "Gegen den historischen Wert der Notiz spricht vor allem ihre Singularität. Weder Justin, noch Irenäeus, noch Agrippa Castor, noch Clemens oder Hippolyt nennen wie Origenes ausdrücklich ein Evangelium des Basilides."

- *Ref.* VII.25.5: When then, he says, it was necessary for the children (τέκνα) of God to be revealed to us . . . the *gospel* came into the world (ἦλθε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς τὸν κόσμον). . . .
- *Ref.* VII.26.1: Therefore the *gospel* came [first] from the Sonhood (ἦλθεν οὖν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον <πρῶτον> ἀπὸ τῆς υἱότητος), he says to the Ruler, through his Son who sits beside him. . . .
- *Ref.* VII.26.4: It was still necessary for the *gospel* to come (ἔδει λοιπὸν . . . ἐλθεῖν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) also to the Hebdomad, in order that the Ruler of the Hebdomad might be taught in like manner and evangelized (ἵνα . . . διδαχθῇ καὶ εὐαγγελισθήσεται).
- *Ref.* VII.26.5: And the Son of the Ruler of the Hebdomad was enlightened, and he proclaimed the *gospel* (ἐφωτίσθη . . . καὶ εὐηγγελίσατο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) to the ruler of the Hebdomad. . . .
- *Ref.* VII.27.7 (three occurrences): In order that we may omit nothing from their [doctrines], I will set forth what they say also about [the?] *'gospel'* (περὶ εὐαγγελίου). *Gospel* is according to them the knowledge of hyper-cosmic things (εὐαγγέλιόν ἐστι . . . ἡ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων γνῶσις), as has been made plain, which the Great Ruler did not understand. When then there was manifested to him what are the Holy Spirit (that is, the Boundary), and the Sonhood (ἡ υἱότης) and the God-who-is-Not (ὁ θεος . . . ὁ οὐκ ὤν) (who is the cause of all these), he rejoiced at the things that had been said and exulted, and this according to them is the *gospel* (τοῦτ' ἔστι κατ' αὐτοὺς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον).[34]
- *Ref.* X.14.9: And [Basilides] says that on Jesus who was born of Mary the power of [the] *Gospel* came (κεχωρηκέναι τὴν <τοῦ> εὐαγγελίου δύναμι<ν>), which descended and illumined the Son of the Ogdoad and the Son of the Hebdomad for the illumination and separation and purification of the Sonhood left behind that he might benefit and receive benefits from the souls.

These citations in Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VII.25-27, X.14 reflect understandings of εὐαγγέλιον as a revelation (*Ref.* VII.25.5, 26.1, 26.4), as oral procla-

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[34] Hippolytus's description continues in *Ref.* VII.27.8, where he notes similarities between Basilides's (supposed) conception of Jesus and the reports of the 'NT' gospels: "But Jesus according to them was born, as we have before said. And after he came into being by the birth before explained, all those things likewise came to pass with regard to the Savior, as it is written in the gospels (ὡς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις γέγραπται)." At this point, however, Hippolytus offers a comparison of Basilides with the 'NT' gospels and not Basilides's own interest in written gospels. Cf. the Greek text edited by M. Marcovich, *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (PTS 25; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986), 301, which begins a new paragraph at *Ref.* VII.27.8, to illustrate this shift in the discussion from VII.27.7 to VII.27.8. Greek: Marcovich, *Hippolytus*; English translations of the *Refutatio* are from Legge, *Philosophumena*, and as necessary are modified to conform more accurately to the Greek.

mation (*Ref.* VII.26.5), as the knowledge (γνῶσις) of things revealed (*Ref.* VII.27.7), and as the manifestation of divine power (*Ref.* X.14.9).

Thus, different from the attribution of Origen (*Homilies on Luke* 1.2) and others, Hippolytus reflects no knowledge of a work by Basilides identified by the literary designation εὐαγγέλιον. Nor does Hippolytus suggest that the various gospel citations attributed to Basilides were considered εὐαγγέλιον.[35] This is somewhat surprising, since Hippolytus's (secondary) testimony[36] presents a "Basilides"—or perhaps in fact later 'Basilidians'—who made extensive use of numerous 'NT' writings, including the gospels.

7. *Epiphanius: Reworking Irenaeus and Encountering the (Later) Followers of Basilides*

In his *Panarion* (*c.* 374-377 C.E.), Epiphanius of Salamis (*c.* 310/320-402/3 C.E.) seems to know some form of the tradition preserved by Irenaeus:[37]

> He [Basilides] claims that not Jesus, but Simon of Cyrene, has suffered. When the Lord was taken (ἐκβάλλω) from Jerusalem, as the sequence of the Gospel has it (ὡς ἔχει ἡ ἀκολουθία τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), they compelled a certain Simon of Cyrene[38] to bear the cross. . . . While he [Simon] was being crucified,

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[35] Interestingly, according to Hippolytus, Basilides's use of the 'NT' gospels is, for the most part, limited to their opening chapters. See *Ref.* VII.21.3 (possibly alluding to Mark 4:30-32 par.); VII.22.3-4 (citing John 1:9 after Gen 1:3); VII.26.9 (citing Luke 1:35); VII.27.5 (citing John 2:4b, and then mentioning the Magi of Matt 2:1-6 [οἱ μάγοι . . . τὸν ἀστέρα τεθεαμένοι]). At no point is the term εὐαγγέλιον used in connection with any of these gospel citations or allusions, however. Cf. Hippol., *Ref.* VII.22.13 (possibly alluding to Eph 1:21); VII.23.5 (apparently alluding to 1 Cor 3:10); VII.25.2 (citing a combination of Rom 5:13, 14a); VII.25.3 (citing Exod 6:2-3; Eph 3:5a); VII.25.5 (citing parts of Rom 8:22, 19; Eph 1:21); VII.26.2 (citing Prov 1:7/9:10/Ps 110:10); VII.26.3 (citing 1 Cor 2:7, 13); VII.26.4 (citing a combination of Pss 31:5-6, 51:11); VII.26.7 (citing Eph 3:5a, 3a; 2 Cor 12:4).

[36] Following Löhr, *Basilides*, 313-23, that Hippolytus does not offer a reliable witness to the historical Basilides.

[37] With Löhr, *Basilides*, 273: "Der Basilidesbericht bei Irenäus, haer. 1,24,3-7 ist direkt oder indirekt die Quelle weiterer häresiologischer Referate bei Pseudotertullian, Epiphanius v. Salamis sowie Filastrius von Brescia."

[38] Gk.: ἠγγάρευσάν τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον. Notable in Epiphanius's paraphrase of this gospel material is the mixture of distinctively Matthean (ἠγγάρευσαν, apparently from Matt 27:32; cf. Mark 15:21: ἀγγαρεύουσιν) and Markan (τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον, apparently from Mark 15:21; *pace* Matt 27:32: ἄνθρωπον Κυρηναῖον ὀνόματι Σίμωνα) materials. Greek text: K. Holl, *Epiphanius* (Vol. 1; GCS 25; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915). English translations include: F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (NHS 35; Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 36; Leiden: Brill, 1987-94); and P. R. Amidon, *The*

> (ἐκείνου δὲ σταυρουμένου) Jesus stood opposite him unseen, laughing at those who were crucifying Simon. But he himself flew off on high once he had delivered Simon to crucifixion, and returned to heaven without suffering.[39]

Concerning the reliability of this testimony, however, it is doubtful that Epiphanius's version of Irenaeus's (questionable) testimony offers a reliable source for the historical Basilides.[40]

Epiphanius had visited Egypt around 335 C.E. and had come into contact there with Basilidians, who apparently tried both to convert and to seduce him (*Panarion* 26.17.4-9). At one point Epiphanius quotes Basilides as follows:

> But the vagabond [Basilides] says (ἀλλά φησιν ὁ ἀγύρτης), "We are the ones who are the human beings (οἱ ἄνθρωποι), and all the others are pigs and dogs (ὗες καὶ κύνες). Therefore he/it [Basilides? Jesus? a 'gospel'?] said (διὰ τοῦτο εἶπεν), 'Do not cast pearls before the swine or give what is holy to the dogs (μὴ βάλητε τοὺς μαργαρίτας ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων, μηδὲ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσίν [= Matt 7:6ba]).'" (*Panarion* 24.5.2)

The citation presents, in reverse order (!), the two imperatives of Matt 7:6ab, without the possessive pronoun ὑμῶν.[41] Epiphanius's citation includes none of the remainder of the saying as preserved in Matt 7:6cd.[42] Although this saying is not attested in the other 'NT' gospels, *Didache* 9.5 (μὴ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσί) contains part of it, possibly from some form of Matt 7:6a. Moreover, a version of the saying in *Gospel of Thomas* 93 reflects redactional expansion that interrupts the flow of the version of the saying as preserved in Matthew.[43] Thus, if a written source lies behind this testimony of Epiphanius, it is most probably either Matthew or some writing based upon Matthew. Of course, this conclusion concerning *Panarion* 24.5.2 implies nothing concerning Basilides's own use of 'gospel' materials.

Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis: Selected Passages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[39] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24.3.2, 4; cf. 24.4.1, 24.8.6-8, 24.9.3-24.10.4.

[40] With Löhr, *Basilides*, 37, 275-80; see above on Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.24.4.

[41] Matt 7:6ab: μὴ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσὶν μηδὲ βάλητε τοὺς μαργαρίτας ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων. Cf. Grant, *Second-Century Christianity*, 21.

[42] Matt 7:6cd: μήποτε καταπατήσουσιν αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτῶν καὶ στραφέντες ῥήξωσιν ὑμᾶς.

[43] *Gos. Thom.* 93: "[Jesus said,] 'Do not give what is holy to dogs, lest they throw them on the dung heap. Do not throw the pearls [to] swine, lest they . . . it [. . .].'" ET by T. O. Lambdin in: J. M. Robinson, gen. ed., *NHL*, 136.

Analysis: Did Basilides Write a Gospel?

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, von Campenhausen, although cautious concerning what can be known about the content of Basilides's gospel, is persuaded that such a writing circulated with the title εὐαγγέλιον.[44] Von Campenhausen bases this inference upon the following testimony of Agrippa Castor, as preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea: "In expounding his [Basilides's] mysteries he [Castor] says that he [Basilides] compiled twenty-four books on the gospel (εἰς . . . τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τέσσαρα . . . εἴκοσι συντάξαι βιβλία)" (*Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7; cf. 4.7.4-6). Accordingly, von Campenhausen's inference rests upon the reliability of this testimony.

The question whether *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7 claims that Basilides compiled gospel materials (presumably, from sundry gospels), or materials *about* the gospel (that is, commentaries), hangs on the interpretation of the verb συντάσσω. Elsewhere in his *Church History*, Eusebius uses this verb in a citation of the (notoriously problematic) testimony of Papias of Hierapolis, that "Matthew compiled the sayings (τὰ λογία συνετάξατο) in the Hebrew/Aramaic language, and each one interpreted them as he was able" (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). The meaning of συντάσσω in *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16 is quite straightforward: Matthew is said to have 'compiled' or 'organized' a collection of Hebrew/Aramaic sayings of Jesus. If this definition of συντάσσω[45] is applied to *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7, it would follow that Eusebius (perhaps also Agrippa Castor) regards Basilides's work as comprising primarily gospel materials and not commentaries "on the Gospel."

The fragments of Basilides's surviving work, however, cannot be used to support the accuracy of the testimony of Agrippa Castor (or at least Eusebius's presentation of it). Moreover, it would be mistaken to infer that, in the absence of polemic against Basilides, Eusebius's testimony can be taken at face value.[46] It thus follows that von Campenhausen's basing an inference upon this uncorroborated testimony (*Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7), that Basilides's gospel was known as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, is tenuous.[47]

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[44] Von Campenhausen, *Formation*, 139 n. 161: "In all probability it was at first, as Agrippa Castor says . . ., referred to by them simply as 'the Gospel'. The designation κατὰ Βασιλείδην εὐαγγέλιον . . . may not originally have been attached to it."

[45] Cf. W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, ^{3}2000), 974.

[46] *Pace* Löhr, *Basilides*, 11-12.

[47] With Löhr, *Basilides*, 33; cf. 33-4 on the work of Psalms that Origen elsewhere (*Com. on Job 21:12*) attributes to Basilides. Löhr further notes concerning Origen, *Comm. in*

Analysis: The Content and Character of Basilides's Treatises (Exegetica)

1. *Did Basilides Write a Gospel (or Biblical) Commentary?*

As noted above, Zahn, Windisch, Grant, Layton, Löhr, Procter and Edwards maintain that Basilides of Alexandria wrote a gospel (or biblical) commentary.[48] It remains to consider whether the evidence could support this characterization of Basilides's writing. Indeed, it does not.

Two of the three surviving portions of Basilides's work are not involved primarily with biblical interpretation or 'exegesis' of any kind. One is a treatise on Providence (Clem., *Strom.* 4.81-83), and the other reflects a dualistic understanding of good and evil (*Acta Archelai* 67.7-11). However much interest Basilides may have had in the Parable of the Rich Man and the Poor Man (cf. Luke 16:19-31) is not clear from the short allusion in *Acta Archelai* 67.5c. It thus follows that the surviving portions of Basilides's *Treatises* (or *Exegetica*) do not commend a primary characterization of Basilides's work as an 'exegesis' of gospels or other Christian literature or, for that matter, any kind of a biblical commentary. Nor does the evidence support Löhr's characterization of Basilides's oeuvre as a work that took scripture as the starting point for the exploration of various theological topics.[49] Although someone like Irenaeus in the second century could be described as an exegete without having produced an entire work that constitutes a patristic biblical commentary, the surviving evidence does not support an analogous attribution in the case of Basilides.

2. *ΕΞΗΓΗΤΙΚΑ as a Literary Designation or Title*

In light of the conclusion that Basilides did not write a gospel (or biblical) commentary, the question may thus be raised: Why is it that Basilides came to be credited with having written such a work? The origins of this influential position in scholarship are perhaps indebted to Clement of Alexandria's use of *Exegetica* as the title for Basilides's work (Gk.: Ἐξηγητικά,

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Matth. Ser. 38 (on Matt 24:7): "Unser Fragment gibt uns also keinen Aufschluß über eine positive Lehre des Basilides und seiner Anhänger . . ." (211). H.-C. Puech ("Gospel of Basilides," 399; cf. 398) is likewise cautious concerning what can be known about this work: "In short, it must be said that all conjectures concerning the Gospel of Basilides remain uncertain."

[48] See above, nn. 6-7.

[49] Löhr, *Basilides*, 12-13; cf. 34, 215, 325-6, 329.

Strom. 4.81.1). Unlike the title that the *Acta Archelai* attributes to Basilides himself ("*Treatises*," attested in *Acta Archelai* 67.5a: *tractatuum eius*; 67.b: *nobis tractatuum*), the title attested by Clement may have suggested to some scholars that Basilides was an 'exegete' of scripture.

Yet even if one was to suppose that *Exegetica* served as a title for Basilides's (*fl.* 120-140 C.E.) work, in Greek the term Ἐξηγητικά almost never connotes a commentary on an esteemed body of literature prior to Origen in the mid-third century C.E. On the contrary, the adjective ἐξηγητικός pertains to a "narrative" or, more aptly for the surviving fragments of Basilides's writing, an "explanation."[50] The physician Galen (d. 199/200 C.E.), for example, uses the adjective in this way when referring to his own and others' medical works as ἐξηγητικὰ ὑπομνήματα ("explanatory treatises").[51]

The only possible example I have found to the contrary is the following description of a work by the Hellenistic Jewish author Aristobulus of Alexandria (2nd c. B.C.E.) by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* 7.32.16): βίβλους ἐξηγητικὰς τοῦ Μωυσέως νόμου ("books that explain [or: 'exegete'] the Law of Moses").[52] Notably, Eusebius (d. *c.* 340 C.E.) is later than Basilides (and Origen), but may well use ἐξηγητικά to describe Aristobulus's work as explanatory of the Jewish Law in relation to Aristotelian philosophy (cf. Euseb., *Praep. evang.* 8.9) rather than as a commentary on the Law.

Moreover, prior to the time of Basilides Ἐξηγητικά (less frequently, the singular, Ἐξηγητικόν) is attested as the title for works, for example, by the

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[50] LSJ, s.v. ἐξηγητικός. See also, e.g., Acusilaus (Hist.; 5th c. B.C.E.) Test. 5.2; Antigonus (Paradox.; 3rd c. B.C.E.), *Hist. mir.* 60b.1.11; Chrysippus Soleus (Phil.; 3rd c. B.C.E.) *Frag. logica et physica* 174.9, 1018.2; *Frag. moralia* 613.5, 614.4; Diogenes Babylonius (Phil.; 2nd c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 64.3; Arius Didymus (Doxogr.; 1st c. B.C.E.), *Liber de philosoph. sectis* 77.1.16, 80.1.3; Aristonicus Alex. (Gramm.; 1st c. B.C.E.-1st c. C.E.), *De sig. Od.* 16.18.3.

[51] Gal., *De sanitate tuenda* 6.107.8 (διὰ τῶν ἐξηγητικῶν ὑπομνημάτων, in the context of defending the views of 'Hippocrates' from the criticisms of Theon of Smyrna [*fl.* 130 C.E.]) ; cf. 6.106.4; Gal., *De difficultate respirationis* 7.764.11-12 (ἐξηγητικά τε γραφόντων ὑπομνήματα τῶν συγγραμμάτων αὐτοῦ, concerning writings by Hippocratic physicians); Gal., *In Hippocratis de victu acutorum* 15.749.6-7 (summarizing a point that Galen has made in greater detail elsewhere: λέλεκται γὰρ ἤδη περὶ τούτου πολλάκις ἐν ἄλλοις τέ τισιν ὑπομνήμασιν ἐξηγητικοῖς καὶ ἐν τοῖς περὶ κρίσεων); Greek texts: K. G. Kühn, ed., *Claudii Galeni, Opera omnia* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2001 [1821]).

[52] Greek: M. Black and A.-M. Dennis, eds., *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece; Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt Graeca* (PVTG 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 217-28; here, 227.

historian Autocleides (*fl.* early-3rd c. B.C.E.) on Alexander the Great.[53] Unfortunately, like Basilides's work, Autocleides's and so many other *Exegetica* do not survive. For the present study it suffices to note that what can be ascertained about Autocleides's (and other) *Exegetica* does not support the characterization of Basilides's *Exegetica* as a commentary on an esteemed body of Christian literature. Rather, the "explanations" of Autocleides and others commend the otherwise straightforward inference that Basilides's work offered "explanations" (ἐξηγητικά) of his own theology.

In fact, Clement himself does not claim on the basis of the title Ἐξηγητικά that Basilides's work was 'exegetical.' Clement uses Ἐξηγητικά in reference to three different works in his *Stromateis*: In addition to that by Basilides, Clement discusses an *Exegetica* by Julius Cassian (*fl.* late-2nd c.) and the *Explanations of the Prophet Parchor* by Basilides's son Isidore. Neither of these other two references to the term Ἐξηγητικά in the *Stromateis* warrants characterizing Basilides's work as 'exegetical.' Clement mentions Cassian's work in connection with Clement's argument that "the philosophy of the Hebrews will be demonstrated beyond all contradiction to be the most ancient of all wisdom. This has been discussed with accuracy by Tatian in his book *To the Greeks*, and by Cassian in the first book of his *Exegetica* (ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Ἐξηγητικῶν)."[54] Although Cassian's (lost) writing would obviously have reflected interest in the Mosaic Law, Clement presents this work not exclusively (or primarily) as a biblical commentary but

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[53] The *loci classici* cited in LSJ (s.v. ἐξηγητικά) are incomplete and not entirely correct. The title of Autocleides's work is attested in Plutarch, *Nicias* 23.9.3 (ὡς Αὐτοκλείδης διέγραψεν ἐν τοῖς ἐξηγητικοῖς). The Greek text is available, e.g., in: B. Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives* (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1916), 3.292. Plutarch may have derived this information from Philochorus of Athens (Hist.; 4th-3rd c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 3b.328.F.135b. Other references to works with the title *Exegetica* (or *Exegeticon*) include: Aeschylus (Trag.; 6th-5th c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 42.A.480a.2, on a work by Timosthenes. On an *Exegetica* by Anticledes, see Demon of Athens (Hist.; 4th-3th c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 22.6 (ὡς Ἀντικλείδης ἐν τοῖς Ἐξηγητικοῖς ὑποσημαίνει); Crates of Athens (Hist.; 1st c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 3.5; Harpocration of Alexandria (Gramm.; 1st or 2nd c. C.E.?), *Lex.* 233.5, 258.2 [cf. *Lex.* 200.11, 224.1]. Additional *Exegetica* receive mention in: Clidemus of Athens (Hist.; 5th c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 20.4 (ὡς Κλείδημος ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Ἐξηγητικῷ); Phaenias Eresius (Phil.; 4th c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 22b.4; Aristophanes Byzantius (Gramm.; 3rd-2nd c. B.C.E.), *Frag.* 76.4; Erotianus (Gramm. et Med.; 1st c. C.E.), *Vocum Hippocr.* 85.6, 85.10, 115.5, 116.12; *Frag.* 40.2; Athenaeus (Soph.; 2nd-3rd c. C.E.), *Deipn.* 9.78.8, 11.34.18, 11.46.4 (ὡς Ἀντικλείδης φησίν ἐν τῷ Ἐξηγητικῷ γράφων οὕτως . . .).

[54] Clem., *Strom.* 1.21.101; ET (modified): ANF 2.324. Little is known about Clement's apparent contemporary in Alexandria, Julius Cassian, whose Encratism Clement criticizes elsewhere (*Strom.* 3.14.99).

as a discussion of scripture in relation to Hellenistic philosophic literature. Likewise, Clement's three citations from Isidore's *Explanations of the Prophet Parchor* do not characterize Isidore's work as 'exegetical.'[55]

On the contrary, the inference that Basilides's writing offered "explanations" (Ἐξηγητικά) of, or "treatises" (*Acta Archelai* 67.5a: *tractatuum eius*) on, his system accords with what the surviving fragments reveal about this work, as well as with the customary use of ἐξηγητικά until Origen in the mid-third century C.E. However tempting it may be to interpret Basilides's so-called Ἐξηγητικά in proto-Orthodox terms,[56] or to highlight his purported innovation, the notion that Basilides wrote an extensive gospel (or biblical) commentary is unfounded and most probably inaccurate. This conclusion does not, however, dispute (or confirm) the importance of *Jesus* in Basilides's thought. By analogy, the apostle Paul places much weight on Jesus' significance, but hardly anyone would attribute to Paul written gospel materials.

Conclusion: Basilides and 'Gospel' in the First Half of the Second Century

This article views as highly unlikely the possibility that Basilides wrote a gospel concerned primarily with the life and teachings of Jesus. It has also been argued that there is no credible evidence that Basilides recognized (any of) his own work(s) with the name εὐαγγέλιον (cf. Hippol., *Ref.* VII.25.5, 26.1, 26.4-5, 27.7; X.14.9; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24.5.2). These conclusions do not necessarily set aside another possibility, however, namely that

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[55] Clem., *Strom.* 6.6.53: "And Isidore, at once son and disciple to Basilides, in the first book of the *Expositions of the Prophet Parchor* (ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν τοῦ προφήτου Παρχὼρ Ἐξηγητικῶν), writes also in these words: 'The Attics say that certain things were intimated to Socrates, in consequence of a demon attending on him. And Aristotle says that all men are provided with demons, that attend on them during the time they are in the body—having taken this piece of prophetic instruction and transferred it to his own books, without acknowledging whence he had abstracted this statement.' And again, in the second book of his work, he thus writes: 'And let no one think that what we say is peculiar to the elect was said before by any philosophers. For it is not a discovery of theirs. For having appropriated it from our prophets, they attributed it to him who is wise according to them.' Again, in the same: 'For to me it appears that those who profess to philosophize, do so that they may learn what is the winged oak, and the variegated robe on it, all of which Pherecydes has employed as theological allegories, having taken them from the prophecy of Chum.'"

[56] E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. Evang.* 6.10.50.7, referring to Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* (Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν ἐξηγητικοῖς ὁ θαυμάσιος Ὀριγένης . . . διείληφε).

Basilides wrote a gospel whose content differed significantly from those of, for example, the 'NT' gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas*.

First, it must be pointed out that in the second century an *evangelium scriptum* need not be a narrative gospel (like, for example, the 'NT' gospels or the *Gospel of Peter*). A possible indication that a work bearing the designation εὐαγγέλιον could also be a theological work is the 'Gnostic' *Gospel of Truth* found at Nag Hammadi, and sometimes attributed to Valentinus (*c.* 105-165 C.E.).[57] Irenaeus, moreover, notes the acceptance of a (the?) *Gospel of Truth* among the Valentinians, as well as differences in content between whatever gospel he knows by this name and the "gospels of the apostles" (*Adv. haer.* 3.11.9). At least for Irenaeus in the late-second century, there was no problem with using the term εὐαγγέλιον even for a 'heretical' gospel that differed significantly from the content of the 'NT' gospels.[58] As a consequence, this study's conclusions about what kind of a gospel Basilides *did not* write should be qualified.

But if one understands gospel as a narrative type of text (like the 'NT' gospels), then the evidence to support the contentions of K. Aland, W. Bauer, W. Foerster, G. May, E. Procter, H. von Campenhausen and A. Gregory that Basilides wrote a gospel is meager. There is no use of the term "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) in connection with a writing by Basilides prior to Origen. Moreover, Hippolytus (especially *Ref.* VII.27.7) consistently attributes to Basilides understandings of εὐαγγέλιον as oral proclamation or revelation rather than as a writing. Although it is possible that Basilides wrote a gospel like the *Gospel of Truth*, again, there is no evidence of it. Epiphanius's citation of "Basilides," reproduced by K. Aland in his *Synopsis* and regarded as evidence for the existence of a "gospel of Basilides," must therefore be viewed with skepticism: The citation and the explanation of the text is, in essence, no different than what any number of patristic witnesses—from

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[57] This is only a possibility, however. On the uncertainties concerning the authorship of the *Gospel of Truth* and its original title (if it had one in antiquity), see Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (WUNT 65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), esp. 339-47.

[58] Thus, Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 22, does not persuade when he assumes a connection between the designation εὐαγγέλιον and the content of a gospel: "This book [the *Gospel of Truth*] may have been composed by the famous Gnostic teacher Valentinus, and must be dated in the middle of the 2d century. It is not a writing that belongs to the gospel literature; but it is a homily or meditation. It uses the term 'gospel' in its incipit. . . ." An ET of the *Gospel of Truth* by H. W. Attridge and G. W. MacRae is available in: J. M. Robinson, gen. ed., *NHL*, 40-51. Cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003 [2002]), 106, 123.

Irenaeus to John Chrysostom—offer, namely a passage quoted from the "common" text of the author's time and place, and then interpreted according to that author's understanding. Scholars do not presume that these Fathers were quoting their own gospel—a "Gospel of Irenaeus," for example. Why here? Thus, this article's suggestion that *if* Basilides ever did write a gospel, a possible literary analogy could be the *Gospel of Truth*. Indeed, the latter work bears some resemblance to the 'narrative' or 'explanation' that Basilides offers for his system in his *Treatises* (*Exegetica*).

Although this article has dismissed the notions that Basilides wrote either a gospel commentary or a gospel like Mark, John or *Thomas*, these conclusions do not discount Basilides's prominence as a Christian leader in early-second century Alexandria. If anything, this study serves to highlight the distinctiveness of Basilides among the many voices and writings that flourished in early Christianity.

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